MARABOUT

In Arabic *murābiṭ*; three separate but related meanings of the word marabout have been identified and each is linked to a specific period. During the 8th to 11th centuries it meant *one who is garrisoned*. This referred to a member of a Muslim religious community who lived in a ribāṭ where he had both military and religious duties. The marabout possessed certain religious qualifications such as being a *qurrā* or reciter of the Qurʾān; a *muḥaddithūn* or transmitter of Ḥadith; a *fuqahā* who was a jurist of Islamic law; or an ascetic. They were highly esteemed by the people.

During the 12th century, the mixed form of Islam, Judaism, and Amazigh traditions that predominated for 4 centuries, gave way to a much more rigorous and conservative Islam in most of western North Africa. This form of Islam had roots in the 8th century with the Sanhaja Lamtuna tribe. With this tribes preaching and growth in power, the held over Judaic and Amazigh traditions were discarded. Those who propagated this conservative form were called the *al-Murābiṭūn*, the root of *Almoravid*. After the rise of the Almoravids, every missionary who organized a group of disciples wanted to be identified with the ruling tribe and the meaning of *murābiṭ* expanded to include any Amazigh missionary.

In the 14th century, Sufi mysticism as taught by Abū Madyan was introduced by the Sanhaja Zirid and Hammâdid tribes and soon it pervaded Muslim religious life. From this time the meaning of *murābiṭ* meant any preacher who called for the formation of Sufi fraternities aligned with the Madyan teachings.

Not only did the word lose all trace of its original military defense meaning but in Algeria, a fourth definition developed: a *murābiṭ* was the domed tomb of a pious man.

In Salé, Sidi Abdallah ben Hassoun is a good example of a marabout. His tomb remains the place to go to ask for protection on an upcoming sailing voyage.

Today most sources equate the Islamic marabout with the Catholic saint which works as a simple analogy but is misleading – the marabout is such because of his education, his devotion, and his work for Islam while a saint has some sort of miracle attached to their person.

[The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica]

Baraka is the holy power within characteristic of the *marabouts* (saints). The marabouts or *murābits*, set up schools, their *zawāyā* which mainly taught *Sufism* a more esoteric branch of Islam, in Morocco. Their growing, decentralizing power was countered by the Sultan through promoting the teaching of orthodox Islam by the *'ulamā'* in the *madarsas*.

The core tribes of the Sous are the Ammiln, Amanouz, Igouman, Tasserist, Ida ou Samlal, Ida ou Baqil, Aït Souab, Ida ou Guendif, Aït Baha, Aït Mzal, Ida ou Ktir, Ida ou Zekri, and Aït Abdellah. [Dictionary]